

REMARKS

The Examiner allowed claims 1-20.

The Examiner rejected claims 21-23 under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claim 1 of US Patent No. 6,635,331. Applicant has filed a terminal disclaimer to overcome this rejection. Copies of the assignments regarding the present application and the cited reference are attached as evidence of common ownership.

The Examiner rejected claims 21-23 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Blum (US Patent 6,219,876). Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner as to the intent of claim 21 as originally written. However, Applicant has amended claim 21 to clarify the distinction which was intended originally. Specifically, claim 21 has been amended to indicate that the strips have an upper surface free of a display or a portion thereof and that the strips are adapted to be walked on when the mat system is in use. The Examiner admitted that Blum does not disclose strips in addition to the display strip independently attached to the mat, but indicated that it would have been obvious to use a plurality of display sections. Even if this is true, however, one of the key factors of Applicant's invention is the use of the plurality of strips which are not intended to be the display section, but rather are portions for walking on which are removably and re-attachably connected to the mat such that the mat can be produced separately from the strips and a variety of types of strips may be used with the mat so that the manufacturer can stock the mat in an intermediate condition and then finish it with a specified type of strips. Blum clearly does not teach or suggest this limitation or this concept in any way. Therefore, Applicant submits that claim 21 is allowable and that claims 21-23 are allowable as depending from claim 21.

Applicant has added new claim 24 depending from claim 21 to further define Applicant's invention. Applicant submits that Blum fails to teach or suggest a flow through mat or a flow through mat defining a plurality of slots in which respective strips are removably and re-attachably connected to the mat.

Nor does Blum teach or suggest that the mat define a drain opening adapted to allow liquid to drain out of the slot. Therefore, Applicant submits that claim 24 is independently allowable in addition to being allowable as depending from claim 21.

In view of the foregoing, the Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the claims and most earnestly solicits the issuance of a formal notice of allowability for the claims. Please call the undersigned attorney if any questions remain after this amendment.

Respectfully submitted at Canton, Ohio this 22nd day of July, 2004.

SAND & SEBOLT

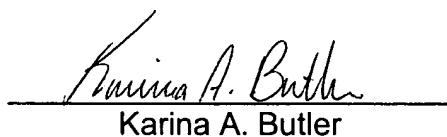


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